



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 31, 1860.

No. 3.

SHAWN NA SOGGARTH;
OR,
THE PRIEST-HUNTER.
AN IRISH TALE OF THE PENAL TIMES.

BY M. ARCHDEACON, ESQ.,
Author of the Legends of Connaught, &c.
CHAPTER I.

Ellen found, on entering the cottage, that the bell had been used as a summons from Katty, in consequence of a sudden and startling change in Sir Edmund; and, on approaching the bedside, she was utterly shocked—almost paralyzed, by the fearful alteration produced by a few minutes. His jaw had fallen; his lips were become compressed, and his eyes rolled vacantly, as she leant over him, her own almost sightless with tears. They closed, however, as she leant, and every appearance gave token of fast approaching dissolution.

She looked piteously towards the bewildered old woman, and, sinking on her knees, prayed aloud, but with tear-broken prayers, for his recovery; for, as yet, she knew so little of death, that she could not bring herself to believe or admit that he could die. She prayed long and fervently, and before she had ended, the eyes again opened, and she sprang joyfully to him.

"Ellen—is this my own Ellen?" he said, in a low, faint voice, his eye settling on her with a dim and struggling gaze, after having glanced wildly around, and his cold, wasted fingers resting on her's, which, delicate as they were, half feared to return the pressure, lest it should be too harsh.

"Ellen," he continued slowly, and struggling hard for the fast departing breath, "I believe I have been dream—ing, or am I still in re—ality in this world? I thought I was with your mother, and that we were again joined for ever, and we were long—ing for you; and O, it must be a long way back, I feel so weak—ried, and I must re—turn—God in heaven bless you, my own Jew—el, and be a father—to—you—and—keep—you—in—the—true—faith."

The eye gradually closed for ever. Like the wasting taper, its light became extinct; but while the faintest glimmering remained, it was shed on her whom its extinction left an utter orphan in a troubled world; and the lips were in motion, endeavoring to shape her name after the power of utterance had ceased.

Ellen neither shrieked nor fainted, though the old woman uttered a fearful cry when the eyes closed and the head fell. She only took the stiffened hand in her own, glued her mouth to his, whence she thought she felt the breath still issuing, and besought her dear father to say only one small word, that she might know he still heard her. She could not bring herself to believe the father she so loved, and by whom she was so beloved, could thus depart and leave her alone and desolate with so little warning. She placed her hand on his brow, his heart—put her ear to his mouth—his nostrils, hoping to catch some indications of still breathing existence. O! the first death-bed of those we love that we are condemned to witness, is a fearful trial to the young and affectionate spirit. It is hard, then, before the chilling scenes and experience of life have rendered us callous, to reconcile us to the certainty that the hand is cold and stiff that was wont to clasp ours so warmly—that the tongue, familiar from infancy, shall never welcome us again—that the eye, which never looked on us but with unaltered affection, shall never more brighten at our approach.

It was not until some time had elapsed after the spirit had flown, and that she had made repeated attempts to obtain a response, however faint, from pulse and lip, that the overpowering conviction forced itself on Ellen that she was indeed parentless; and then, at last she would have sunk to the floor, but that she was caught in the arms of Frank, who had silently entered a few minutes previously, after having had a protracted and satisfactory interview with Arthur Ffolliot, and who bore her from the room.

The rumor of Sir Edmund's death spread but slowly in that scattered neighborhood; and but few were the mourners—chiefly aged women and boys—that congregated to the wake that night. But on the following night there was a considerable assemblage of the peasantry, many of whom had come several miles to testify their regret and respect for him, however fallen, under whose fathers they and theirs had lived for centuries and centuries. There was, however, no wild or noisy wailing, owing less, perhaps, even to the circumstances of the times, than to respect for sacredness of Ellen's grief.

She bore her bereavement, after she had once become convinced of its reality, with much more calmness and resignation than either Frank or herself had calculated on. After having, with Frank's consent, spent an hour in tears and prayer alone with the corpse, when it had been "laid out," she rose from her knees, and, con-

trolling at once the rushing tears, turned with a determined composure, few of her years could assume, to direct arrangements, and have refreshments liberally prepared for the wake visitors; the liberality she was enabled to exercise in this respect being, as usual, a source of consolation, however melancholy.

It was late in the night after Sir Edmund's decease, when Father Kilger entered the cottage. He had been in a distant portion of the parish, and had not learned the tidings of his old friend's death till a few hours previously, since when, he had crossed streams, and traversed mountain and bog in the rain and darkness, in order to reach the cottage before the funeral could possibly take place. Immediately after his entrance, having offered some consolation to Ellen, on her last and greatest bereavement, and exhorted her to bear it, as the Christian should, without murruring and without repining, he proceeded to give her the highest consolation human being could now afford her, by the celebration of Mass for her father's eternal repose. Preparatory, however, to the sacred ceremony, much caution was requisite and was exercised, particularly as it was whispered by one or two, that Shawn was seen hovering about the neighborhood in the evening. The corpse room was occupied by some aged men and women, the long attached and faithful retainers of the Lynch family, with a few juniors of their respective families; and thither, after a searching scrutiny among the occupants of the parlor and kitchen, by Frank and the priest—the latter arrayed in humble lay garb, with hat slouched and coat muffled—such of these as were deemed trustworthy, were also drawn gradually and by whispered invitations; some being left undisturbed, a few, known to be faithful persons, for appearance sake, and a few suspected either of having attended the wake through curiosity, or whose known and frequent intercourse with Sir Robert, caused them to be, in the present case, objects of suspicion.

When the congregation selected to assist at Mass, and consisting of about twenty persons, young and old, were gathered into the small corpse room, which they completely crowded, the door was locked and the window shutters fastened, with a thick screen suspended inside them, lest, from the lowness of the window, the slightest glimpse of the proceedings could be obtained from the outside, while a kerchief was placed over the keyhole, that no prying eye might benefit by it. Then the priest, having hurriedly arrayed himself in the few sacerdotal robes he had kept secreted beneath his disguise, commenced the service in a tone little above a whisper, but which was distinctly audible and eagerly heard amid the intense silence preserved by the little group—a silence almost profound as that of the corpse for which they prayed. Eagerly, indeed, did Ellen, above all, listen to the holy words so seldom heard of late, and which she knew would have been so highly prized by him for whom they were now offered up. It seemed as if her spirit, altogether sublimated from earthly thoughts, were poured forth with each prayer, though, now and then, she was obliged to bow her head, to rub away the last rushing tears, as her eye involuntarily wandered from the clergyman and the ceremony he was performing to the pallid face of the dead, so soon to be hidden from her view for ever; while Father Bernard, his tall, thin person and spiritual features rendering him no inapt representative of a mediator, as he stood between the living and the dead, performed his functions with fervor and deep feeling, low as were his accents, notwithstanding that, occasionally, he could not control a glance of doubt and fear towards the door and window. And it was well those precautions had been taken, as the ceremony was barely at its conclusion, and the assistants only preparing to leave the room gradually, and one by one, when the voice of the recreant, Sir Robert—now Sir Robert beyond all dispute—was heard in loud and violent altercation with some who were attempting to stay his progress beyond the little hall that divided the parlor from the wake-room. He was evidently intoxicated, and his voice completely terrified the occupants of the wake-room, with the exception of Frank, who, with flashing eye, was proceeding to open the door, in order to hear the brutal bacchanal without.

"No, no, Frank, you shall not endanger us all to indulge your excited temper, whatever excuse there may be for your excitement at present," said Father Bernard, placing himself against the door and laying one hand on Frank's shoulder, while with the other he hastily concealed the sacerdotal robes again within the coarse garments he had resumed. "I know that voice, too, and it bodes good neither to those individuals here nor to us, were we to be seen through your means; besides that any collision would, surely, be out of place and character just now, however gross the conduct of the misguided boy.—That window, small as it is, will permit our egress, without risking such unholy collision;—

and in that direction you must come with me, by which means we shall avoid endangering the living and disrespecting the dead. Let us move at once then."

"Father Bernard is right, dear Frank; and do remove yourself with him for a few hours, for all our sakes," said Ellen, after a moment's pause. "And leave you exposed to drunken and brutal insolence, Ellen, were even nothing further to be feared."

"There is nothing to be feared for me, Frank," she said, earnestly, "but as you would save from insult the poor remains of him who loved us both—oh! Frank, go at once—" a burst of hysterical sobbing overpowered her, and she sank against the bed.

"I am gone, dearest Ellen," he exclaimed;—and with the agility pertaining to his form and habits, he had passed through the little window which had been opened by the priest, and was assisting the latter in his less active descent.

They had scarcely completed their egress when Sir Robert, having broken away from those who had been endeavoring to detain him, kicked fiercely at the door, exclaiming in a tone of drunken violence, "Open at once, I command ye. I know ye have some varmint among ye, but I'll unearth him speedily, or blazes to me!"

The door was instantly opened; and the scene that met his view might well have sobered and softened any less hardened than himself. His sister was resting on the bed, looking almost as pale and lifeless as the parent stretched beside her, while the hushed silence of the other shrieking occupants corresponded well with the lighted candles and the other insignia of a death chamber. And the sight had a momentary effect.—He paused in the doorway, and stared wildly around. The effect was but momentary however; for he was in that stage of drunkenness—not drunkenness itself—when the violent and evil tempered are least governable by themselves or others. Recovering instantly his intoxicated and heartless brutality, he advanced into the room and shouting, "Nell, I understood you had one of the forbidden—one of the real game among ye, and I was determined to give him chase;—but you have given him the start I see."

"Robert, Robert, this is terrible," said the sister, raising herself; "look there"—she pointed to the corpse.

"Yes, I see, Nell. He has run the course we must all run, and distanced us I suppose.—Well, he was a highfyer in his day and deserved a longer course."

"Oh! God forgive you, Robert, for having the heart to speak so. Fallen, fallen as you were, I could not imagine that you could bring yourself to use such words respecting—respecting—Oh! God forgive you again. She sank her face on her hands.

"Nell, you needn't get into the heroics. I can feel as well as another; but it wasn't to cry I came here now. I suspected and heard you intended to bury the old boy according to your own forbidden ideas, and the foolish way he lived;—but I am determined he shall be buried in the lawful and respectable way befitting the head of the Lynches, and without any of the howling of those drunken beldames and brutes—perdition to them, what brings them here?" He shook his hand and stamped fiercely; and the women stumbled in confusion out of the room; the few men among them followed too, though two or three of them paused without the door to watch the issue of the scene, burning with rage, and only prevented, by their affection for Ellen and their veneration for the dead, from laying violent hands, even in the wake-room, and at all risks, on the ruthless and unnatural son and brother.

"Robert," said Ellen, starting up, and wiping away the tears which had been blinding her, "I have borne, with a calmness wonderful to myself, your brutality up to this moment. I have not even once accused you of having hastened the death of my darling father by your abandoned and unnatural acts. But now that you venture to assert you will inter him, whose heart you have broken, with rites contrary to those of the faith he loved and hoped in, I discard, at once and for ever, all ties between us, proclaiming you in the presence of our father's corpse, as the monster you are, and telling you, to your face, you shall not dare remove a single inch the dear remains of him to whom your very name was an abomination for many a long month past."

Outraged grief and affection lent her a degree of energy, that completely startled her heartless brother, as she stood confronted with him, proud and erect, with flashing eye and cheek momentarily flushed from marble paleness to deep crimson. But the spirit of partial intoxication supported him, and he instantly rejoined, with a brutal laugh, "Hallo, my little girl, I see you're true game; but you're crowing a little too loud, though you may expect to be backed by master Arthur Ffolliot or cousin Frank, that, I hear, has been seen hovering about here latterly with some of his smuggling friends. But, my little

vixen, you'll soon find that even their weighty back won't be able to prevent me from burying Sir Edmund Lynch in a way worthy of his rank and loyalty, though his wake has not been so."

"Away, heartless and impious renegade, and pollute not further the presence of the dead," she said, stamping her foot and clenching her small hand energetically. "Begone at once before patience is utterly exhausted. You think I am lone and at your mercy, but you are wrong"—some two or three faces, with fierce excitement stamped on them, showed themselves at the door, and fiercely muttered imprecations were uttered—"and you think not—cannot at present think, what such terrible provocation may produce. Away, then, to your drunken and dissolute companions, and no longer disquiet the apartment of the dead, lest heaven itself should crush you where you stand?"

"Yes, Miss Ellen, darlin'," exclaimed Katty, rushing in, after having been aroused from a long slumber, with her thin, grey hairs, tossed wildly about her withered face and neck, and fury flashing from her rheumy eye, "let him begone afore the sperrit itself gets up, an' strangles him on the spot, like *Honreese dhu* (black Henry) did with his ondutiful son, at his own wake (to themselves be it tould)—God and the Vergin forgive me, that I should have a hand in rairin' sich an onnathrel crather. Sure enough it was a pinnace on me, for some terrible sins o' thim that came afore me. Oh Mather Robert, Mather Robert, how can ye look on the dark, could face foreint ye, an' think o' all the times it smiled on ye, and that he had ye on his knees, as he wasn't even a dhrop's blood to ye, an' spake so hardened?"

"Be silent, you old drunken bellicat, and get out of my way instantly, or my whip shall be laid on your witch-like carcass."

"Me dhruk! ye rale dhrukken an' onnathrel brute," exclaimed the old woman with fierce bitterness, her small, red eyes, dilated for the moment, and her withered hands clenched, while her frail body shook with rage; "Arra, Miss Ellen, darlin', af he ris his hand to me that carried him in my arms—I wish they were palsied whin I did id, an' o'fn an' o'fn I tould Sir Edmund an' my Lady (the heavens be their bed this night) that they wor petting up a viper, whin I used to see his boldness and ondutifulness; but what signifies what an old colliagh ses—but af he ris his hand to me, I'd claw the very face o' him; I would, af I was to be hung for id the next minnit." She spoke with clenched teeth, and stretched out her long nails as if preparing to spring wild-cat-like at his throat, while ev'ry joint in her body trembled with passion.

Utterly enraged by her bitter taunts, he raised the whip which he carried, but his hand was arrested by Mr. Gordon, the rector of the parish, who entered just then.

Mr. Gordon was a liberal-minded man, of extensive erudition in society, and was entirely in advance of the bigotry of the times. He had even the boldness to state his opinion openly and fearlessly on all occasions, that the brutal statutes, intended to crush the Catholic faith in Ireland, would merely have effect of vitally injuring his own religion, and in accordance with such opinion, had frequently in his parish, interposed the shield of his protection between the persecuted Catholic and the rigor of those vile laws.—Accordingly he had been for some years in such bad odor with the dominant party as to have completely shut out from him all prospect of high church preferment, which his influential family connections would otherwise have naturally entitled him to calculate on. On the other hand, he was repaid to some extent by the respect and affection with which he was regarded, by the proscribed peasantry in this neighborhood. He had been on cordial terms with Sir Edmund and his family, since his induction into the parish, and had been peculiarly kind and attentive to himself and Ellen, during the last two or three troubled years.

He had been already twice at the cottage to visit and console her since her father's death; and having on this night been informed that Sir Robert had been seen passing on towards the cottage, late as was the hour, he, with truly charitable consideration, left the bosom of his family, in order to shorten, if he could not entirely prevent, the tumult and confusion he rightly judged would be likely to arise from the unfeeling son's intrusion into the house of death.

"Hallo, Mr. Gordon," said Sir Robert, turning fiercely round, and shaking off his restrainer rudely, "you will recollect that though you are a parson, I care very little more for a parson than for a priest."

"I must remember, also, Sir Robert, that I am a man, and I wish you, too, would recollect that you are one, on so solemn and what should be to you, so deeply sorrowful an occasion."

"You are not in the pulpit now, Mr. Gordon; we want no sermons here, and you must not interfere in my family concerns."

"I shall interfere now and at all times, as a

clergyman and a gentleman, to protect my friend Miss Lynch, from insult and annoyance, if she wishes my interference."

Ellen grasped his hand and looked confidently and gratefully in his face without speaking; while Katty, shaking her hand triumphantly at Sir Robert, exclaimed, "thank God, Miss Ellen has some wan to back her now, besides an old colliagh."

"I tell you, Gordon," said Sir Robert, in a violent tone, "though I may be obliged to pay you tithes for nothing, you shall not prevent my having my father buried according to my own wish. I am not to be rode rough-shod over like an old woman or a boy."

"I wish, Sir Robert," said Mr. Gordon, impressively, "you had shown more filial respect towards an over-indulgent parent during his life, and that, instead of profaning the house of death, you were now exhibiting conduct more indicative of the feelings of a son, and a Christian, on so solemn and mournful an occasion. Then how cordially should we all unite with you, in conducting the obsequies of him whose charity and kind-heartedness so richly deserved, that his remains should be respected by all."

"You're spakin' as thrus as gospel, Mr. Gordon, jewel," interrupted Katty, with a shrill shout, "it's himself that was the charitable and the kindhearted; the Lord is rewarding him this night for id in heaven; and God bless you for telling that onnathrel and undutiful turncoat, axin' yer reverence's pardon, that it was his unnatural conduct and hard heart that kilt my darlin'—ould mather so soon intuely."

"Gordon, you are calculating on your grows, like any other old woman," said Sir Robert, furiously, as he glared from Katty to the clergyman; "but, though you reckon on your cloth saving you from personal chastisement, you may find yourself mistaken, even in that respect, if you persist in thus thwarting me in a matter that does not concern you, besides that my word may be something with Sir John still."

"Sir Robert, you miscalculate my character altogether, else you are not just now in a state to estimate it properly, or you would not deem for a moment I could be deterred from interfering in a case that affects me so strongly as this by any personal or selfish fears. All paltry considerations in regard to preferment, you might have learned before this, I have long ago hung to the winds; and I now tell you distinctly that I shall remain here, however it may anger you, until I see you depart from a roof you should protect from annoyance against the world, and beneath which nothing should have tempted you to intrude on this night, and in so unhallowed a spirit."

"The minister has a soul to be saved after all, and he's taking like a christian sure enough," whispered Katty to a crone who had had the hardihood to remain with her, when her other companions fled; while the infuriated baronet swore, with tremendous imprecations, he would make the benevolent clergyman retract his words and speedily.

"Arra don't purtind to hear the brute, yer reverence; and myself an' the women alene'll soon give him the outside, not to be aggravin' yourself an' the darlin' young mistress, not to talk o' disturbin' the blessed corpse."

"Aye, pitch the blaspheming turncoat out of the windy," exclaimed some of the men outside the door, forgetting, in the resistless excitement of the moment, all fears for his future resentment.

Mr. Gordon seated himself calmly by the window, while Sir Robert, clutching his whip more firmly, glanced fiercely from the rector towards the door, whence the voices had proceeded. There was something, however, so threatening and ominous of danger in the wolfish eyes and fierce countenances that protruded through the doorway, that after a brief struggle with his wrath, he moved out, swearing he would have the burial his own way, after all, and that he would have revenge, and speedily, on Mr. Gordon, and, pursued by the "curses, loud and deep," of the devoted retainers amid whom he proceeded.

After quitting the cottage he paused more than once, and turned towards it again, as if half determined to re-enter it and carry his point despite all opposition; the quantity of the drink he had taken, having been just sufficient, by its excitement, to render him obstinate and quarrelsome, in addition to the opposition he had met, from a quarter whence he had expected none.—But he was deterred by the recollection of the scowling faces he had left behind, and the certainty that there was not one friendly to him among them. So he was fain to continue his route towards the Hall.

(To be continued.)

A person reading a quotation from the London Literary Gazette, respecting the consumption of oil, found the usual abbreviation—London Lit. Gaz.—Upon asking the meaning of a neighbor, he was informed that it meant—London is lit with gas!